

THE CONSCIENCE AND FUTURE JUDGMENT.

Selected by Mrs. GILLIAM.

I sat alone with my conscience
In a place where time had ceased,
And we talked of my former living
In the land where the years increased;
And I felt I should have to answer
The question it put to me,
And to face and answer and question
Throughout an eternity.
The ghosts of forgotten actions
Came floating before my sight,
And things I thought were dead things
Were alive with a terrible might;
And the vision of all my past life
Was an awful thing to face—
Alone with my conscience sitting
In that solemnly silent place.
And I thought of a far-away warning,
Of a sorrow that was to be mine,
In a land that then was the future,
And now is the present time.
And I thought of my former thinking
Of the judgment day to be,
And sitting alone with my conscience
Seemed judgment enough for me.
And I wondered if there was a future
To this land beyond the grave;
But none gave me an answer,
And no one came to save.
And I felt that the future was present,
And the present would never go by,
For it was but the thought of my past life
Grown into eternity.
Then I woke from my timely dreaming
And the vision passed away,
And I knew the far away warning
Was a warning of yesterday.
And I pray that I may not forget it
In this land before the grave,
That I may not cry in the future,
And no one come to save.
And so I have learned a lesson
Which I ought to have known before,
And which though I learnt it dreaming,
I hope to forget no more.
So I sit alone with my conscience
In the place where the years increase
And I try to remember the future,
In the land where time will cease;
And I know of the future judgment,
How dreadful so'er it be,
That to sit alone with my conscience
Will be judgment enough for me.

A SERMON. SUBJECT—HOBBIES.

PREACHED BY R. Z. REPGLOE.

TEXT: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin; and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." &c.—Matt. 23: 23-28.

The scripture lesson under consideration teaches, literally, a principle of partiality in the law—a placing undue stress on one part, neglecting or disregarding another,—a dangerous principle, not done in our relation to God and his law, but even in the light of civil law; a principle we need to guard against, ever remembering that sincere obedience is universal. He who from a right principle obeys *any* will have respect to all. It is not a question of accusation for obeying "small things," but making a hobby of them. Hence the theme suggested is "Hobbies." Webster says: a hobby "is a subject or plan upon which one is constantly setting off; a favorite theme of effort, discourse or thought; that which occupies one's attention *unduly*, or to the weariness of others."

From the definition of "hobby" thus given, we are forced to conclude we find them in all circles of life. In the literary or educational circles, we frequently find men and women, who, in a public assembly make a very able exposition of a subject, and we form a conclusion that they are the highest type of literary excellence, but an intimate friend will tell us, "that is his hobby." And upon a more thorough intimacy we find it true. Outside of this special line he is inferior to others of his rank. The same applies in commercial or business circles, and perhaps in no others can we illustrate as well. Those who are at all familiar with the mercantile business know there are some goods of which almost all regular buyers know the value, and others that have not such a general price, and so each merchant makes his own. A pretended "cheap" merchant will make a hobby of, and advertise, a well-known line of goods cheap—a little below the standard price—in order to induce a customer to believe he is the man to go to, "if you want to buy cheap." The unwary goes and buys that which he knows the value of, a little under the general price, but while there will buy other goods, the price of which he does not know, and for this he pays more than he would need pay elsewhere—even with his regular merchant—unknowingly. After a while he meets his neighbor who has bought the same article. "right at home" for less money, and he begins to look up the matter, and finds that the merchant has made a hobby and he was deceived. Need I tell you the result?

We might illustrate hobbies in the scientific, the social and other circles with a like result. But it is hobbies in a religious circle that are the most dangerous, and it is these that claim our attention this morning. In the text as well as in the context, the principle of hobbies and their results are forcibly treated.

Christ is talking to a class of people who observed "small duties" even to the extent of boasting, and neglected greater ones. They were very exact in paying "tithes even to mint, anise, and cummin," and boasted of it: "I pay tithes." Now this was their duty, and Christ does not find fault with them for *doing* them. The *woe* is not because they pay tithes, not even for the keeping of "the traditions of men," but because of paying tithes and keeping the traditions, to the exclusion of other duties, and making "the commandments of God of none effect." In using the term "weightier matters," it is implied that these of paying tithes of mint, anise and cummin, are weighty, but those are *weightier* which are expressive of inward holiness. The Savior plainly teaches that judgment, mercy and faith are weightier things than paying tithes, Judgment and mercy towards men, and faith towards God. Hence the prophet Micah (6: 8) says, "Do justly; love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." "This is the obedience that is better than sacrifice."

This principle of hobbyism was specially manifest among them in two ways:

1st. Undue importance to *lesser* things.
2nd. Undue importance to the *outside*, and neglecting the *inside*.

Notice: they were very scrupulous about lesser sins; but committed greater without hesitancy. Hence the language of the Savior, "Ye strain at gnats and swallow camels." Says Matthew Henry: "They consider a violation of the traditions a greater sin than the violation of the law of God. As, for instance, they gave Judas his price, but scrupled about putting the money into the treasury. They did not go into the judgment hall lest they be defiled, but stood *without* and cried against him, notwithstanding Pilate said, after every effort was made, 'I find no fault in him, and desired to release him, but they said *not this man, but Barnabas*.' Blinded with hobbies! Notice their stress on *outside*; altogether for *outside* and not at all for the *inside*. See verses 25-28, and they met the deserving woe from the Savior: 'For ye make clean the *outside*, but within extortion excesses'—emblem of their character. Not woe because 'ye make clean *outside*,' but because of the neglect *inside*. Is there any resemblance between these characters and ourselves of to-day?

Thou blind! "cleanse first *inside*, which is the more important, and the *outside* will be clean also." The principle underlying is, being more desirous to *appear* righteous than to *stand* approved before God.

But these scripture records of hobbyism have had their day and denunciation by Christ, our head, and they are on record for us only as lessons of warning to avoid falling into the same error. Yet it is a sad fact that we see the same repeated continually in our day, and the same stress put upon "little things" and externals to the extent of hobbies. Lately, in listening to a sermon from the text: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," the hobby of "all things" was the *outside*, and in illustrating "new things" by a new house, the weather boarding and the roof, required chief attention, and the *inside* seemed to need but very little. And the language of the text came forcibly to me. Not that there is nothing at all in *outside* appearance, but remembering in the language of Balgaul, "that a sheep's coat is not stripped off but grows from within." Not only so, but many of us remember that not many years ago when we went to the house of God, no matter what the text was, baptism and the ordinances of the Lord's house were the leading ideas of the sermon, and every Lord's day we were obliged to hear what the good brother knew about baptism, and some times a little more. The result I need not tell you now.

Not only are the hobbies of by-gone days unpleasant, injurious, and suggestive of the language in the text, but to my mind, many existing hobbies of to-day claim attention because of their dangerous tendency, and I say it with all due respect to those who differ with me, and I am glad for the assurance (inward) that in preaching I have not made a hobby of "our difference," but there are some hobbies extant, right among us, that claim attention, and I could not stand approved before God in my own conscience, if I did not call attention to them and point to the result. One of these was forcibly brought to my mind lately, when one who once called me brother, said he "would like to come and hear me and others preach, but his 'conscience did not allow him'." He feared he would be committing a sin, because we would not "hear the church." This language has been made a dangerous hobby. Dare not go to hear them preach because they would not "hear the church." If that were carried out we would not dare to hear any protestant preach, from the fact that all Protestant churches are the

result of "not hearing the church," in the sense that it is used here. When we look into Romanism and see the corruptions therein we thank God—and not only we, but upwards of 97,000,000 thank God—that there was a Luther who would "not hear the church," but raised his voice and all his powers against the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the world. So we also thank God that there was an Alexander Mack and others who would "not hear the church," when "conscience could not be satisfied with these things, and covenanted together as brethren and sisters with the covenant of the cross of Christ." Their assurance was, "Where two or three are gathered together." Notwithstanding it did "embitter the hearts of the rulers, through the influence of an envious priesthood, and cause persecution and drive them to America, twenty-one years after its organization." Sixty thousand American citizens rejoice to day that these people refused to hear the church in the sense that we do. That there is such an injunction on the followers of Christ we will not deny, but we find it only in connection with private affairs, and it does not have so broad a significance as is generally given by our opposers. He can only be branded a heretic and heathen and publican who will refuse to hear the church in matters where God speaks, or he who teaches things contrary to the law upon which the church is founded—God's Word.

The next hobby is: "Be not conformed to this world." Rom. 12: 2, which, if possible, is used even more inconsistently than the one just named, from the fact that it is used to condemn almost any and everything that is not common among a certain class,—even to the studying and preparing of sermons. But says one, "What are you going to do with this injunction? Throw it away?" Nay; but preach it and practice it too. It does not consist in possession—else we could not have farms, dwellings, schools, buggies, in short anything that the world has. Neither could we use machinery, or the result of science. We are to "be transformed by the renewing of our minds," so as to use what we do possess to the honor and glory of God.

The "order of the church," or usages, is the next we shall notice as a prominent hobby, and largely detrimental to the church of Christ. Men have been led to measure offenses by it, more than by the word of God. Indeed it has been a prominent feature in general conference as well as local churches, that the "order and usage" would outweigh and hide the merits of any issue that did not harmonize with established usages. It was condemned by the term "Pride," another hobby that would need attention had we time.

The next dangerous hobby and one closely connected with pride, is the "onemind." "We must all be of one mind." The dangerous part of it is, it is construed to mean my mind, and here is its connection with pride. "One mind," scripturally, means the mind of Christ. It was to use every lawful means for the furtherance of his cause, which ought to be our cause, and this should be our "one mind." Had we time we should notice in full all the hobbies that we consider detrimental to the cause of Christ, such as "only believe," "according to thy faith," and a number of others, hobbies of doctrine, to the exclusion of practical religion, such as we are confronted with so much.

One more that claims its full share of attention among us, is the "Self-support of the Minister," one that is perhaps as much ridden as any one. "Take neither purse nor scrip," &c. "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities." Acts 20: 34. "For ye remember, brethren, our labors and travail for laboring night and day, of you, because we would not be chargeable to any of you." 1 Thes. 2: 9; and "Because I preached the Gospel of God freely;"—all these are kept prominently before the mind; while such scripture as 1 Cor. 9: 2: "Even so hath the Lord (not man) ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel;" and 2 Cor. 11: 8, which says "wages" (German, gold), and Gal. 6: 6. "Let him that is taught communicate to him that teaches in all good things" (temporal gifts); these are almost entirely forgotten, and the result is a crippled ministry and a suffering cause. I do not speak to condemn any of these duties, or any of these injunctions referred to, but giving undue stress. I also know that it is my duty as a minister, and yours as hearers to guard against going to the other extreme, and lose sight of the good principles that others have made hobbies of. Never lose sight of any teaching, as for instance, hearing the church, the teachings relative to pride, "Be not conformed," baptism, one mind, and the time for a minister to labor with his own hands, which is to avoid being burdensome. All these need their due attention, but not more than others equally important. Any usage that is backed by a Gospel

principle, make it a part of your life, and remember that plainness (void of superfluity and extravagance) is an essential, just as much as to be void of covetousness, and I am responsible if I do not warn you, and you are responsible if you do not heed the warning. And now, friendly sinner, you have listened to my exposition of hobbies. Do you have any? I wonder whether the mistakes of professors, the seeming contradictions in scripture, and the cross of Christ itself, whether some of these or all of them are not made hobbies by some of you, that hide the beauties of religion from your sight. Something of the kind evidently keeps you away from Christ. Or is it perhaps an idol of the flesh on which you rest? Oh, may God help us to tear away every hobby, every idol, and know God and his word as we ought. The result of hobbies is clearly stated in the Savior's language—hypocrisy and blindness. Undue stress upon any part of God's word leads to blindness to some other part, and undue stress put upon externals leads to hypocrisy, and both or either of them, will prove fatal to our eternal and best interests. You remember the illustration of the merchant's hobby, result—a customer deceived and at last, no doubt, the merchant himself. You remember, many of you, how we have had men among us who made hobbies of "usages and externals," and called some of us before church tribunals for their violation, and at the same time were blinded to the sense of dealing unfairly with, and taking advantage of, their fellowmen, as was proven beyond any doubt. "STRAINING AT GNATS AND SWALLOWING CAMELS." So the hobbies of the worldling blind him to lose his eternal and best interests.

May God help us "rightly to divide the word of truth," as ministers, and accept it as hearers, and at last be gathered to see the beauties of it all, and escape the woes of the unfaithful. Amen.

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THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

What is it?

BY EDWARD MASON

I have been patiently waiting to hear from some of our brethren, and have so far only seen two short articles from brethren Davis and Rife. Why is this? Surely all Bible students must have formed some opinion about it. Perhaps some may think that it is not profitable to us in these days to investigate the subject. That is wrong. Notwithstanding that the great Dr. Talmage in a late sermon expressed his opinion that it cannot be committed in this day, I assert that it is within the scope of possibility to-day. If it is not why was it written in the Gospels? It might have been left out with the other many unrecorded acts and sayings of Christ. Now in looking at this passage, we want to take it in its simplest meaning, and not shroud it with a mystery it does not possess. That is the trouble with most commentators.

To understand what the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost consists of, we must take the passage in question in connection with the preceding miracle. This miracle was so real, that the Lord's old and greatest enemies could not account for it on any natural principles. They found themselves in a straight. So to maintain their opposition which they had assumed toward Christ, there was no other course left open to them than to ascribe the miracle to the agency of Satan. They could not deny the miracle. Neither could they ascribe it to divine power and consistently oppose him. So they had nothing else left for them to do but say the power was Satanic.

Now to make the passage of some importance to us, the question suggests itself, is it possible for us to commit this sin? And of what does this blasphemy consist, which forever seals a man's fate? There are many answers to this latter question, which we may class under two heads. One is that the sin is of such a peculiar nature that the Pharisees, because of the circumstances in which they stood alone commit it. The other answer is, that it consists of such opposition to the Spirit of God, as all are liable to who reject the offers of mercy through Jesus Christ. The former one we cannot accept. For in the first place, we have no direct proof that they did commit this sin. Then again, many of this class were among the 3000 converted on that memorable day of Pentecost. Read Peter's sermon very closely. And lastly, if these people were beyond hope, why did Jesus pray for their pardon on the cross? Let us investigate the subject logically.

To get at a proper answer, we will ask, what is necessary to the remission of sins? First God, as the sovereign of the universe must be disposed to pardon. Forgiveness is the exclusive prerogative of God. If God then is unwilling to pardon, that ends the matter. But God is revealed to us as one